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CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

POOR LAWS,

ON THE

Preſent State of the Poor,

AND ON

HOUSES of INDUSTRY.

With ſome occaſional Remarks on a Pamphlet lately publiſhed on theſe Subjects, by the Reverend R. POTTER.

Occaſioned by the Bill now depending in Parliament for eſtabliſhing an HOUSE of INDUSTRY, for the Hundreds of *Mitford* and *Launditch*, in the County of *Norfolk*.

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CONSIDERATIONS

ON

The Poor Laws, &c.

IT muſt be a ſingular pleaſure to all, who deſire the happineſs of their fellow creatures, to obſerve the ſpirit which univerſally prevails, of enquiring into the ſituation of the poor; and, that this very humane and benevolent enquiry, is become, at leaſt partially, an object of parliamentary conſideration.

That ſome thing in the Poor Laws is wrong, is an obſervation in the mouth of almoſt every perſon, that ſees the multitude of miſerable beings, who continually infeſt the ſtreets.

The complaint is not new; but how far it is grounded in truth, may be very well called in queſtion; perhaps, upon proper examination we ſhould find, that the fault is not in the laws, but in ourſelves.

An attempt for the more effectual relief of the poor has been made, by introducing, in different parts of England, certain eſtabliſhments, generally known by the name of Houſes of Induſtry. The bill which is now depending in Parliament, for forming ſuchan eſtabliſhment for the hundreds

hundreds of Mitford and Launditch, in the county of Norfolk, gave riſe to theſe ſheets.

Among other recommendations in favour of theſe eſtabliſhments, a very ingenious pamphlet has been publiſhed, by the Rev. Mr. Potter, which ſeemingly contains all that can be ſaid in their behalf. Yet notwithſtanding the advantageous light, in which the author of that pamphlet endeavours to place them; they are ſtill thought by perſons who have given the ſubject proper examination, to be very dangerous and pernicious inſtitutions, and open on every ſide, to inſurmountable objections.

But whatever their ſentiments may be, the greateſt praiſe is certainly due to thoſe, who favour the

eſtabliſhment of theſe houſes, for their benevolent deſigns. It undoubtedly reflects the greateſt honour on the Engliſh nation, that ſo many gentlemen ſhould turn their thoughts to the laudable undertaking of aſſiſting the poor; but as it is certainly the duty of all who engage in concerns of this extenſive nature, to ſee that the effect of their labours be not loſt, by being directed to an improper object; we hope the following conſiderations will have their candid peruſal.

In the firſt place, I think it will not be denied by any perſon who has at all reflected on the nature of inſtitutions which are of human policy, that they approach the nearer to perfection, in proportion as they preſerve to mankind their natural rights

rights and liberties. Every infringement of theſe, beyond what is juſtified by the calls of ſociety, however it may have the ſanction of authority, is certainly extremely improper, not to ſay tyranical; and being a force upon nature, it muſt bear within itſelf the ſeed of its own diſſolution.

The Poor Law, before the ſtatute of the 43d of Queen Elizabeth, had not arrived at any degree of maturity. It is needleſs to deduce its progreſs, as that has been frequently done of late, by many ingenious writers; but by none more accurately than by Doctor Burn, in his hiſtory of the Poor Laws. Upon that ſtatute, and ſome ſubſequent ſtatutes, the whole fabric of the eſtabliſhment for the poor now reſts.

It is not the reverence due to the great names, or known abilities, of thoſe who framed this celebrated Act of Parliament, that have acquired it the eſteem in which it is deſervedly held. It would be an idle attack on the underſtanding of any intelligent perſon, to ſay, that becauſe it appears with this reſpectable ſanction, it ſhould be conſidered as totally faultleſs, and open to no examination; yet it certainly carries with it, upon this and other accounts, every merit that can poſſibly be derived from external recommendation. The genius of the times, the wiſdom of government, the character of the ſovereign, her excellent choice of miniſters, the care, attention, and even verbal accuracy, with which it is penned, are ſtrong circumſtances in its favour.

vour. They by no means conclude the argument, but they make as ſtrong a preſumption in its behalf as can be offered in behalf of any Act of Parliament whatſoever.

Let it ſpeak for itſelf in the ingenious ſummary * which the author of the obſervations has given of it.

" The church-wardens, four,
" three, or two ſubſtantial houſe-
" holders in each pariſh, ſhall be
" nominated yearly, under the hand
" and ſeal of two or more juſtices
" of the peace, and ſhall be called
" Overſeers of the Poor of the
" ſame pariſh. Theſe ſhall take
" order, by, and with the conſent
" of two or more ſuch juſtices, for
" ſetting

* Page 12, 13.

" ſetting to work the children of
" the poor, and all ſuch perſons
" as having no means to maintain
" themſelves, uſe no ordinary and
" daily trade to get their living by;
" alſo to raiſe, by taxation, a con-
" venient ſtock of materials to ſet
" the poor on work; to raiſe com-
" petent ſums of money, towards
" the neceſſary relief of the old and
" infirm, and to apprentice the chil-
" dren of the poor. And the ſaid
" juſtices, or any one of them,
" to ſend to the houſe of correction,
" or common goal, ſuch as ſhall
" not employ themſelves to work,
" being appointed thereunto as a-
" foreſaid. Such pariſh officers are
" impowered to contract with the
" lords of the manors, and upon
" waſte, or common ground, within
" their pariſh, to build convenient
houſes

"houſes of dwelling, for the impo-
"tent poor; and to place more fa-
"milies than one in one cottage or
"houſe. And ſufficient powers are
"given to aſſeſs and levy ſuch ſums
"of money."

The firſt thing to be attended to in the application of charity, is to beſtow it upon proper objects. Now, who can we ſuppoſe better qualified for this than thoſe, who by conſtantly reſiding in the pariſh, and in the daily view of almoſt every perſon in the pariſh, muſt know their circumſtances as well as it is poſſible for one man to know the circumſtances of another? Such perſons are the moſt likely to ſee when the diſtreſs, for which relief is petitioned, is owing to real calamity, and when to idleneſs, and muſt be the beſt miniſters of

the remedy; to proportion it to the wants, and qualify it to the circumſtances of the object.

Yet perfect as this inſtitution appears at view, the wiſdom of the act goes further. By making the overſeers immediately eligible by the juſtice of peace, and making the conſent of the juſtices neceſſary to their acts, it places a ſuperintendant over their conduct, the moſt natural, and the moſt proper, that can be conceived.

Who ever has the inſpection of another's conduct ſhould be preſumed to have the ſuperiority over him in ſome reſpect. A ſuperiority of underſtanding is upon every account moſt to be ſought for in ſuch perſons. The advantages of wealth, and rank

in

in life, tend alſo much to give their actions greater weight, and to place them the farther from the reach of temptation.

There undoubtedly is a great inequality among mankind, not more in their rank and figure of life, than in their morals and character; but without ſuppoſing a juſtice of peace to be either a driveler or a rogue, his ſituation in this reſpect is the beſt and moſt obvious reſtraint, that can be imagined, upon the male-practices of overſeers. It is hazardous to give a general character to any body of men; but this far may, perhaps, be ſaid with truth, that, commonly ſpeaking, the country juſtices are as reſpectable men as any to be found in the nation. No ones real honeſty is known before it comes to be tried;

and in our opinion of men, we are all equally liable to be deceived, yet it is little leſs than ſcandal of the noble perſonages, who make the liſt for the commiſſion of peace, to ſay that it is filled with men who diſgrace it.

Let us now hear what is objected to them. * "The cuſtom of former "times, and voice of former laws, had "joined the parſon, vicar, or curate, "with the churchwardens, in the "duty of relieving the poor, which "indeed originally was ſolely an ec-"cleſiaſtical matter: The ſtatute has "divorced from the office the man "whoſe education tends to give him "a more liberal and ingenuous turn "of mind, whoſe holy calling makes "him the natural guardian of the "poor,

* Page 12.

"poor, whoſe rank and character "give him a proper weight in the "little councils of the pariſh.

This is undeniably *Cicero pro domo ſua*, but it proves very little. While eccleſiaſtics bore a great part in the councils and in the management of national concerns, and the learning of the kingdom was in their hands, it might be proper that they ſhould be employed in the adminiſtration of affairs; but certain it is, that ſo long as they continued in this ſituation, very few laws would be paſſed to create employments of truſt, of which they would not appoint themſelves managers; and it would be highly unnatural to ſuppoſe they would be a ſelf denying ordinance upon theſe occaſions. Whether they really contract by their education, a more in-

ingenuous turn of mind, than the reſt of their neighbours, is generally much doubted; and as to the holineſs of their calling—I believe there are cannons ſtill in force, which preſcribe them to give to the poor, out of their revenues, all that they do not immediately ſpend upon their own ſubſiſtance: This is certainly an holy calling; but let him fling the firſt ſtone who has anſwered it. In the mean time let me from reſpectable authority preſent this reverend patron of Houſes of Induſtry, with a definition of a clergyman:—
"He is a meek and humble man,
"who meddleth not himſelf in tem-
"poral concerns."

The next thing I meet with in this writer, is a frightful deſcription of the conduct of overſeers, ſheltered by

by a long quotation from Doctor Burn. That there are overſeers who deſerve the ſarcaſtic ſtrictures with which he treats their whole race, I make no doubt. But he either conjures up creatures of his own imagination to fill up his liſt, or he has kept bad company. I have alſo had occaſion to ſee, and to be acquainted with the conduct of many overſeers of pariſhes, and I have found very few who have not executed their office properly. But not to reſt the matter on my ſimple affirmation, in behalf, not only of overſeers, but alſo of juſtices of the peace and quarter-ſeſſions meetings, I appeal to the gentlemen of the long robe, whether from the experience which the courts at Weſtminſter have of the litigations that ariſe on the Poor Laws, the preſumption, is not *prima facie* in favour

of

of the juſtices and overſeers? Beſides, what can be a ſtronger argument in favour of that ſuperintendance, which the law intends the juſtices to have of the conduct of the overſeers, than, that as one of the ſtatutes was expreſſedly found to reſtrain the liberality of the overſeers, another was found acceſſary to reſtrain the liberality of the juſtice in aſſiſting the poor.

* The next argument, is the length of time which may intervene between the paupers being improperly refuſed relief, on an application to the juſtices of the peace, and the meeting of the quarter ſeſſions, when he is to make his appeal. Perhaps this is the part of the Poor Laws moſt liable to objection. If the grievances

* Page 20.

grievance complained againſt, be real, there is an eaſy remedy and the interpoſition of legiſlature would effectually ſet all right. Yet even this objection is tortured to a ſize far beyond the reality, every circumſtance is here brought together to make the caſe as pitiable as poſſible: The moſt unlucky time, the moſt calamitous object, the worſt ſet of juſtices than can poſſibly be imagined.---And this too in poetical language.

Theſe are the chief objections to the Poor Laws, in their preſent eſtabliſhment, and, theſe are the anſwers we oppoſe to them: Which, though perhaps, far from being the beſt that might be made, are, it is preſumed, ſufficient to ſatisfy every unbiaſſed perſon, that the Poor Laws, as far as they now come into conſideration, are

formed on principles of the ſoundeſt policy, and equally calculated for the benefit of individuals and the good of the community.

But nothing ſpeaks more ſtrongly in recommendation of our preſent poor laws, than the fate of the various ſchemes which have at different times been ſuggeſted for their amendment. Among others which the reverend gentleman mentions, there is one which he honours with this expreſſion; * "The ſtrong and compre-"henſive genius of Sir Joſiah Child, "formed a bolder and larger ſcheme." Bold and ſtrong as the author's expreſſion is, it is not equal to the thing deſcribed. In truth Sir Joſiah Child's ſcheme is nothing leſs than to incorporate a body of men, to whom he gives

* Page 32.

gives the honourable name of Fathers of the Poor, with powers to erect ſomething like an Houſe of Induſtry, for thoſe, whom they ſhould chuſe to provide for, in the kingdom of England, and to ſend ſuch as they ſhould think fit beyond ſeas, to his Majeſty's plantations.

The Houſes of Induſtry partake ſtrongly of his bold and comprehenſive ſpirit --But to proceed regularly. § "The firſt idea of difficulty "to the common mind" ſays the author of the obſervations, "may "poſſibly ariſe from his deſire of "knowing how the monies neceſſary "for building and finiſhing ſuch "houſes, are to be raiſed without "levying an additional tax on the "reſpective pariſhes, or withdrawing

 "from

§ Page 34.

" from the poor any part of their " ſcanty allowance." The firſt part of this objection, how the money it to be raiſed, is ſatisfactorily anſwered. While there are monied men in this kingdom, a pariſh rate made a mortgageable ſecurity by Act of Parliament, will never wait long for money lenders: But that ſuch a ſum of money as 12000*l.* can be raiſed without taking from the poor, a part of their ſcanty allowance, appears to me impoſſible. The intereſt of the borrowed monies, muſt certainly ſome way or other come from the fund appropriated to the relief of the poor; and unleſs we can ſuppoſe the intended eſtabliſhment of theſe Houſes of Induſtry, to have the extraordinary quality to leſſen the number of the poor before the ſmalleſt part of the deſign be carried into execution, the

charge

charge will be as heavy and their wants will be as great, after paſſing this act as before. The fund now appropriated for them, is not more than ſufficient to anſwer their neceſſities: Whence, therefore, is the intereſt of ſo large a ſum as 12000*l.* to come, but from an additional tax on the reſpective pariſhes, or withdrawing from the poor a part of their ſcanty allowance? Surely this conſideration alone ſhould check the projectors of theſe bold and comprehenſive deſigns.

It muſt at the ſame time be conſidered what a number of poor might be relieved with the intereſt of the money, expended upon this hazardous undertaking. Could we inſure theſe eſtabliſhments any certain degree of ſucceſs; could it be demonſtratively

ſtratively proved that they would anſwer their end; the national ſpirit of benevolence would be equal to produce any fund neceſſary to complete the undertaking. But when we conſider that they have their foundation in the ſubverſion of laws, which have been in force more than two centuries, and are founded on the ſoundeſt principles of good policy; that their ſucceſs far from lying in certainty is merely ideal; that very few objections lie againſt the Poor Laws, which do not lie equally againſt the new inſtitution; that beſides the unforeſeen caſes which attend every new plan, numberleſs difficulties are now eaſily to be foreſeen, againſt ſome of which it will not be in human nature to provide; and that there is no end propoſed to be anſwered by them, but what may be

equally

equally anſwered by very ſhort and obvious regulations of the preſent ſyſtem of Poor Laws; when this is conſidered can we heſitate a moment in forming our opinion? Does not the propoſed undertaking appear at once, hazardous, expenſive, new, and unnatural?

It is much inſiſted upon, that the poor of the houſes will not be any longer at the mercy of an overſeer.* This ſpectre haunts our author's mind ſurprizingly; but to give even this declamation a patient examen.—How can the poor man be ſaid to lie wholly at the mercy of the overſeer? If he be injured by the overſeer, he applies to the veſtry; from thence, to the juſtice of peace; from him to the quarter ſeſſion. Here are ſo many

* Page 38.

many different juriſdictions, remedial of the errors and the male practices of their inferiors.

But with reſpect to the Houſes of Induſtry. In the firſt place, the poor man is brought from his home, from his family, from his children, from every connection that helps to cheer or ſoften life. He is placed under ſtrangers, who have no claim to his regard or reſpect; he is ſubject to rules which he has to learn; to reſtraints, to which his very ſoul is averſe; to companions, at leaſt indifferent to him. If he be young, he has the reſtraint and peviſhneſs of age to croſs him; if he be old, he has to ſuffer all the petulancy of youth. Without ſuppoſing the governor or the directors to abuſe their powers; yet what may be the hard-

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ſhip of the poor inhabitants of theſe houſes! If they ſtrike or abuſe the governor, or matron, or their aſſiſtants, or even behave diſreſpectfully to them, or excite, or promote any mutiny or diſturbance, or refuſe to do the work aſſigned them, the governor has full power immediately to confine ſuch perſon, or perſons, in the houſe of correction, there to be kept on ſlender diet until complaint can be made to the weekly committee if he ſhall judge that neceſſary; and the committee is to give ſuch directions, and order ſuch other puniſhment as to them ſhall ſeem meet.*

When a penalty is inflicted the offence ſhould be aſcertained, and

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* See the Rules, Orders, and Regulations, for the better Government of the Poor in the Houſe of Induſtry, for the hundreds of Colnies and Carlford, in Suffolk, Page 18. See alſo the Rules of the Bulcamp houſe Page 16, 17.

the perſon offended ſhould not either be judge or officer of the puniſhment. Here what a wild ſcene of tyranny lies open? diſreſpectful behaviour is as indeterminate an expreſſion, and ſubject to as wild and as wanton interpretations as any phraſe in the Britiſh language. The word aſſiſtant takes in every body the governor pleaſes; and as the work done by the poor of the houſe is for the governor's private advantage, he has ſtrong temptations to over-rate their abilities, and expect from them more than they can poſſibly do. Then for any offence, or diſreſpect, or ſuppoſed offence or diſreſpect to the governor, or any perſon whom he may think fit to honour with the name of his aſſiſſtants, he may confine the offender in the houſe of correction, for as long a time as he pleaſes. It was an obvious

obvious reflection, that the governor might be in the wrong; that he might conſtrue innocent behaviour to diſreſpect, or might puniſh a real offence too ſeverely; yet no remedy is given to the poor man. The governor, indeed, if ſimple confinement does not appear a puniſhment equal to the crime of the poor offender, may apply to the committee for a ſeverer puniſhent. [In this too they ſeem to have diſcretionary powers.] But in the mean time, the poor man has no appeal, or even a way of letting his ſuffering be known; but he may languiſh in confinement, unheard, unknown, unpitied, at the arbitrary diſcretion of the governor who is at once party, judge, and executioner.

By a reſolution at a meeting for the hundred of Langford, on 23,

and 21ſt of Decem. 1767, it was ordered that no perſon be admitted to come into the houſe or penthouſe, under pretence of viſiting relations or friends, or ſeeing the houſe without leave from the governor.

So by the rules of Bulcamp houſe, no perſon is to be admitted to ſee the houſe, without a note under the hand of director or guardian; nor any poor be permitted to go out without leave firſt had in writing from the governor, and confirmed under the hand-writing of one of the weekly committee. And they are not to go out without leave, nor ſtay beyond the time allowed them, on pain of loſing their next meat, and ſuch other puniſhment as the weekly committee ſhall inflict.

The

The puniſhment of being confined to ſlender diet, which the governor, at his diſcretion may inflict upon theſe objects, is a ſtrong mark of the arbitrary and unconſtitutional ſpirit of theſe houſes. It muſt be remarked that a private juriſdiction within the great national juriſdiction, or what is uſually termined *imperium in imperio*, ſhould be conſidered with a very jealous eye; ſuch I apprehend is every community that has a power of enacting by-laws for its own regulation. It is therefore an undeniable conſequence that no by-law of any private community ſhould be contrary to the genius of the national law and government. Moreover as the puniſhment ſhould be always meaſured to the nature of the offence; an offence againſt the cuſtoms or laws of any private inſtitution, ſhould not be put upon a level with an of-

fence

fence againſt the cuſtoms or laws of the whole kingdom. Yet here the governor is inveſted with a diſcretionary power of inflicting a puniſhment, both for offences againſt the rules of the houſe, and offences of mere perſonal diſreſpect to himſelf or his aſſiſtants, which is abſolutely unknown to the law of England. For I believe it will be found upon examination, that the law of England does not in any one inſtance mention this puniſhment of being kept on ſlender diet, except in the caſe of criminals condemned for murder.

To proceed to another inſtance of the ſame ſpirit.—I believe in many of theſe houſes, there are certain offences, for which the offender is puniſhed by being ſet in the ſtocks for twelve hours. This is liable to a ſimilar objection; there is no caſe where,

where, by the law of England the offender is puniſhable by being ſet in the ſtocks for more than ſix hours. Short diet is added to this penalty of being ſet in the ſtocks for ſome very trivial offences, by the rules of Blything houſe of induſtry, in the county of Suffolk, which additional circumſtance is alſo abſolutely unknown to the laws of England. It adds to the monſtrouſneſs of theſe regulations, that wherever an offence is, by the laws of England made puniſhable by a juſtice of the peace, the proceeding is regular and notorious, and the perſon accuſed has every opportunity to prove his innocence, or to extenuate his caſe, that can be given him: The juſtice is anſwerable for his behaviour to higher courts, and if upon ſuit at law, the court determines againſt him, he is puniſhed beſides in other penalties, with the

coſts

coſts of the ſuit. But here the proceeding is almoſt a ſecret, and the poor man has no way of intereſting the committee in his behalf, while the governor is left at large to impoſe on their underſtandings by a falſe tale, or to inflame their paſſion by extravagant colouring. This, conſidering the whole ſtops here, and no appeal lies to an higher juriſdiction, is againſt all humanity and propriety, and one of the greateſt ſoleciſms againſt good policy that can be imagined. Moreover, ſhould a diſpute between two of theſe houſes riſe, and recourſe to a court of judicature ſhould be neceſſary, as the expence of the proceeding would fall on the revenue of the houſe and not at all on the parties themſelves, there is no knowing to what expence an amuſement of this kind [eſpecially as a law ſuit ſeldom fails to intereſt

tereſt the paſſions of mankind] might lead them to. Whereas by the preſent law, overſeers have this reſtraint on ther judicial adventures, that they know that generally the expence falls on themſelves.

Another circumſtance of this improvement upon the hardſhip of our preſent poor laws is too material to be paſſed over; I ſhall inſtance it in the words of the author of the obſervations. "By the 43 of Elizabeth, "The children ſhall be bound to be "apprentices, the man child till he "ſhall come to the age of 24 years. "The woman child to the age of 21 "years, or to the time of her mar-"riage. The maiden queen was "here properly attentive to the in-"tereſts and the delicacy of her "maiden ſubjects; but this long ſer-

" vitude of the males is cruel, impo-
" litic and pregnant with evils. By
" the new eſtabliſhment the males are
" to remain under the government
" of the houſe till they are 18, the
" females till they are 16 years old.
" How different this, from his long
" ſevice permitted by Elizabeth, cal-
" culated probably to retard mar-
" riage!" But here the author ſeems not to have attended to the real ſtate of the caſe; for if they continue under the government of the houſe, the male till 18, the female till 16, in the firſt caſe, the apprentiſhip will continue one year longer, in the ſecond, two years longer than the time allowed by the ſtatute of Queen Elizabeth. It is true, that the governor's humanity may abridge the time of ſervitude, by putting them out apprentices at an early age: But this is ſo contrary to his

his intereſt that we ſhould be too ſanguine to hope for many ſuch exertions of humanity: So that the truth is, that by the ſtatute, the apprenticeſhip of the male muſt laſt till his age of 24, and the apprenticeſhip of the female till her age of 21 or marriage; but, by the new eſtabliſhment in the caſe of the male it may laſt till his age of 25, and in the caſe of the female, till her age of 23, and no attention is paid to the circumſtance of their marriage.

It is needleſs to comment on theſe facts. It would be very diſengenous to ſuppoſe that theſe ſtrange exceſſes proceed from the inattention or improper ſpirit of the preſent governors; but they ſhew to a demonſtration that, whatever the warmeſt advocates of theſe houſes may pretend to ſay; a

mode of behaviour muſt be obſerved, to keep the houſe in any tollerable degree of order, that is inconſiſtant with our ideas of Engliſh government, and which to every Engliſhman muſt appear extremely cruel and unnatural.

For further informations on this ſubject, I now refer the reader to Doctor Burn's account, from an accurate author, of an inſtitution, of a nature ſimilar to theſe Houſes of Induſtry, which was not long ago attempted to be introduced into France. and which, though ſupported by the royal authority, and the arbitrary ſpirit of that government, proved ineffectual to anſwer its end, and is now found abſolutely impracticable. See Hiſtory of the Poor Laws, 229, 230, 231.

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This is ſufficient to evince the ſpirit of the deſign. How oppreſſive and arbitrary are theſe regulations compared with the act of the 43d of Elizabeth—how contrary to the true principles of police! It is to be hoped that now the conſequences of the eſtabliſhment ſo clearly appear nothing will be ever able to procure them again the ſanction of the legiſlature.

In ſome reſpects it is readily allowed the committee will be a check upon the governor; but whoever knows the nature of committees, how little they are attended too, how ſoon they degenerate into mere matter of form and ceremony; muſt eaſily ſee what little good will be derived from their ſuperintendance. Yet ſhould this but come to fail, and

fail

fail it certainly will, if men are men, the whole fabrick muſt crumble to nothing, or contain a ſcene the moſt horrid that can be conceived, This is not a creature of imagination, but according to the nature of things, muſt take place ſooner or later. While the fathers of theſe eſtabliſhments live, they will be as well managed, and produce as much good as they can poſſibly be brought to bear; but when theſe reſpectable gentlemen are no more, and the family tye to cheriſh them is diſſolved, like other eſtabliſhments of a ſimilar nature, they will become mere matter of job; a prey to the artful, and the receptacle of tyranny and oppreſſion on the one hand; hunger, diſeaſe, and ſlavery on the other.

It is not however neceſſary to look into futurity to find out the inconveniencies of theſe eſtabliſhments. Oeconomy, though it be not in one ſence, the firſt is certainly one of the moſt neceſſary conſiderations upon theſe occaſions. Yet certainly every rule and principle of œconomy, is violated in the following inſtance. The moſt frequent, and at the ſame time, the moſt deſerving objects of charity, are a father and mother with a large family of children. Their principle ſupport is the labour of the huſband. If their wants are beyond what his abilities can anſwer, they muſt be ſupported by the pariſh. The pariſh, when called upon to their relief, conſiders what the earnings of the huſband amounts to, and what he can make by the labour of his family, and then gives him

him what is neceſſary for his ſupport. By this means he takes from them no more than what he abſolutely ſtands in need of, and his ſervices are not loſt to the community: At the ſame time he has every comfort his ſituation admits of; the aſſiſtance and the company of his wife and children, his neighbours and his home. But in theſe new eſtabliſhments, before any thing at all can be done, much time muſt be loſt, and ſome money expended. And in the next place, if beſides his employment as a labouring man, he has any piece of ground to work for his own uſe; if he is of any working trade, as a maſon, a bricklayer, or any other craft whatſoever, his whole labours and ſervices in that reſpect are abſolutely loſt to the public. In Bulcamp houſe

houſe we are told they manufacture every article of dreſs, hats excepted; but how much time and application is neceſſary to make a man of the leaſt uſe in any manufactory whatſoever? And how very long is it before he is competent maſter of it, to gain his livelihood? In moſt trades, the work of an apprentice does not pay his maſter for his board, till the third year. But further—deprived of their principle, perhaps their only ſupport, what is to become of the reſt of the family? are they to be left to themſelves? or are they to be ſupported by the Houſe of Induſtry? In the firſt caſe they muſt ſtarve, in the laſt they become an exorbitant and inſupportable charge. Add to this, the long liſt of officers and aſſiſtants, neceſſary to carry on ſo extenſive an undertaking, and the great

charge to the houſe of their ſalaries and ſupport.

But a capital objection to theſe houſes is, that the poor by this means get to one ſpot, to the manifeſt diſadvantage of huſbandry, the great inconvenience of farmers, and the detriment of the whole nation.

This naturally introduces Doctor Burne's objection, "That by this "means all family connections are "annihilated, except that of one great "family under one head. The men "are propoſed to be kept apart, ſo "likewiſe the women, ſo that there "will be *populus virorum*, and *populus* "*mulierum*."

This the author of the obſervations attempts to prove a groundleſs aſſertion.

aſſertion. But it is ſupported by facts and certain conſequences. He tells us " every new married couple " have a room diſtinct and appro- " priated to themſelves." This perhaps is true, but who are the couples that may be ſuppoſed to fill theſe rooms? thoſe whoſe beſt blood is ran cold? or the young and the healthy? In the firſt caſe the public, naturally ſpeaking, will not have much advantage from this humane proviſion; and in the laſt caſe, it was juſt now ſhewn, that it is far beyond the power of the houſe, to ſupport a whole family merely on account of the inability of the huſband. What then is the conſequence? the huſband and wife muſt be kept ſeparate to the utter depopulation of the kingdom; and I believe it is a known fact, that the clergymen in the hundreds where

theſe houſes have been erected, loudly complain of this very circumſtance.

The next recommendation that is offered in favour of theſe houſes, is the regard which is ſhewn to the health of their inhabitants; and the excellent œconomy and dicipline of the interior of the houſe. As to the firſt, Doctor Burn ſeems to hold it incompatible with ſuch an inſtitution, and his opinion is ſupported by ſome undeniable facts.

In the Hexingham Houſe of Induſtry, the great lodging room is above 72 feet long, 21 feet wide, and thirteen feet high; it contains 24 beds, and about 60 perſons uſually lodge in it.

In the ſame Houſe of Induſtry there are 19 beds in a room, two men in a bed,

bed, and three or four boys. And it is a known complaint, the heat is ſo great, that tho' they leave all the windows open they are almoſt melted. The boys have no place to play in but a ſmall court, and never go out.

It would only be prolonging theſe ſheets to an extraordinary length to produce more inſtances of this nature, but the reader may be aſſured that they occur in almoſt every one of theſe houſes that are now eſtabliſhed, and in ſome in a worſe degree than what is here repreſented. The conſequence is natural. Independant of other inconveniencies, which might here be inſtanced: It may be with truth aſſerted, that the houſe never yet ſent out one good huſbandman.

And as to the attention which is paid to the education of the children till

till there are better proofs than mere aſſertion, it will continue a matter of great doubt, whether the poor children, who are brought up in theſe Houſes of Induſtry, are better taught, or more religiouſly principled than thoſe of the reſt of their neighbours. In ſome houſes, the learning has been entirely neglected, and in moſt it appears to be thrown away. However without going any further, the point is ſimply this; if the clergymen, to whom the inſtruction of the children, in theſe Houſes of Induſtry, is committed, will do their duty, the children will be well inſtructed. The ſame will certainly be the caſe if the clergymen will do their duty by the children of their pariſhioners. So that to make any thing at all of this argument, it muſt be as follows: "I, R. Potter, ſpeak the ſentiments "of the whole clergy.—We neither "do,

" do, nor will take care of the morals
" of the poor, while things remain
" as they now are. But if you will
" erect an Houſe of Induſtry, one of
" us ſhall every Sunday read prayers,
" preach to the poor of the houſe,
" and every Wedneſday and Friday,
" read prayers and catechiſe the
" children, and viſit the ſick if the
" ſick deſire it."

I have here endeavoured to draw, in as fair a manner as poſſible, a comparative view of the new eſtabliſhment, and the preſent ſyſtem of our Poor Laws. Which of them may have the preference in the eſtimation of the judicious reader, it is not our buſineſs to ſay. The ſubject certainly deſerves the moſt attentive reflection, as it affects the condition of many thouſands, and as it takes with it the moſt important conſiderations on the

ſubject

ſubject of law and policy, but with that difference which the judgement of the public has reaſon to claim from an individual, I take leave to ſay; and I believe it will be found; that the more we conſider, the more we ſhall be inclined to abide by our preſent ſyſtem. Certainly as far as theory is concerned, it has theory on its ſide; as far as authority is concerned, it has authority on its ſide; as far as experience proves, it has as much of that as any human inſtitution can poſſibly have. It works great and good ends by ſimple and natural means, it moves againſt no rule of law or policy, and it acts in union with every principle of our government and conſtitution.

The new eſtabliſhment undoubtedly reflects honour on thoſe who

who firſt promoted it, and the benevolent views on which it is directed juſtify all who eſpouſe it; but what has it to put in the ſcale if weighed againſt the ſolid ſterling merits of our preſent eſtabliſhment? is it as natural an inſtitution? as congenial to the ſpirit of our government? is it remedial of all the faults of our preſent laws? is it liable to no objections? and are not theſe objections fairly deducible from certain principles and acknowledged facts? In ſhort, to ſimplify the queſtion as much as poſſible, which ſyſtem, would the candid reader chuſe to abide by, were he in the ſituation of a poor man? would he run from all the endearments and tyes of ſociety, and cooly deliver himſelf up to be confined within the four walls of an Houſe of Induſtry, ſubject to the arbitrary will of a go-

vernor

vernor, and the diſcretionary power of a committee? Would he not rather elect the preſent eſtabliſhment, which directs him every poſſible relief? which relief if denied him by one juriſdiction, he may claim from another, and ſo on from a third; and where he may bring all who dare oppreſs him, to the ſupreme courts of judicature in the land, where his caſe will be as impartially heard, and his right as minutely aſcertained, and as rigidly exacted from thoſe who withhold it, as that of the nobleſt ſubject in the nation.

FINIS.